

CCRC- FY15- EPA EJ Small Grants- 1st Submission

I. Project Title and Project Purpose Statement

Project Title: “Clean Air for Our Health”

Summary Description: This project, implemented by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League and Concerned Citizens of Richmond County (CCRC), will empower and educate targeted communities in Richmond County, NC about the impacts on local air quality and health as a result of toxic polluting industries, municipalities and commercial businesses. The goals of this project are to implement effective strategies as it relates to the Clean Air Act, to reduce local pollution levels, improve air quality, reduce impacts of climate change, increase climate resiliency, and educate residents how to protect their health and children's health from the increased pollution level as a result of climate change. The Concerned Citizens of Richmond County is an incorporated community-based chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), a regional grassroots environmental justice non-profit organization that has served directly-impacted communities in the Southeast since 1984 by providing resources, education, and technical assistance to community groups and locally-based League chapters.

Location of Project: Surrounding region of Hamlet, NC 28345, including the town of Dobbin Heights

Related Environmental Statute: Clean Air Act

Community Climate Resiliency Focus: Implement resiliency-centered community strategies that will mitigate damage, enhance emergency response, and increase recovery time due to climate change.

II. Environmental, Public Health and Community Climate Resiliency information about the Affected Community

Ground-Zero

The affected community is ground-zero of major toxic pollution sources that are in their backyard that continually affect the health of the local community and contribute to climate change. There are currently three energy companies on the same tract of land that are the affected area's greatest sources of pollution and greenhouse gases; Piedmont Natural Gas, Pee Dee Electric, and Duke Energy Combustion Turbines. Of these three, Duke Energy Combustion Turbines on 198 Energy Way in Hamlet, NC is the greatest source. Even though they switched to natural gas during the last four years the overall level of pollution has nearly tripled. From 2008 to 2012, actual emissions of pollutants increased by 115% for nitrogen oxides, 145% for sulfur dioxide, and 146% for formaldehyde. To add insult to injury, in the summer of 2014 they were given permission by NC Department of Air Quality division to increase the usage of the existing auxiliary gas boiler from **1,392 to 8,760 hours per year**, with a relatively low output rate for electricity. Also they were given permission to expand their turbines. Duke has been

permitted to dump 3,514,000 pounds of nitrogen oxides, 714,800 pounds of sulfur dioxide, 3,985,800 pounds of carbon monoxide, and 303,600 pounds of particulates/PM-10 on the residents of the affected area each year. NCDAQ admits that the approved permit would allow for "higher emission of pollutants and carcinogens including particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfuric acid, ammonia, and benzene." According to the Clean Air Act these toxins are known to cause "serious or incapacitating irreversible illness." With Duke's current and projected pollution output along with the other cumulative sources of pollution, the affected area is at increased vulnerability to diseases and impacts of climate change. The disproportionate impact of natural gas power plants weighs heavily on Hamlet.

Since 2013 we have been in contact with residents living in the vicinity of Duke Energy Combustion Turbines who report that the plant is disrupting their lives with noise, odor and smoke. In order to document these problems, we asked residents to compile log books and to take photographs of what they experienced. Some of these photographs were submitted to the EPA in a letter dated July 21, 2014. An African-American member of the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County lives on Waymon Chapel Road in Hamlet, which is not far from Duke's facility. On Monday, June 16, 2014 at 9:29 AM she reported the following:

Around 7:00 am this morning I took these pictures. The smoke was so thick in our behind my home and Duke Energy is behind the Pit....This is the 7th time I've heard the plant, the noise is loud and usually starts around 3:30 in the middle of the night until afternoon. I think there is an increase with the turbines. Lived here almost 10 years I have never heard the plant until this year, time since May 2014. I have not ever seen so much smoke.

Disproportionate impacts of air pollution

The latest census data reveal Richmond County's population is 31% African American, which is 41% above the state average. 24.8% of residents live below poverty level, compared to the statewide level of 16.8%. In other words, Richmond County has 47% more of its people below poverty level than other counties in North Carolina. Richmond County is approximately one and a half hours east of Charlotte, NC.

Those residents who live within six miles of these pollution sources have an even higher disproportionate impact from air pollution. For example, in the Town of Dobbin Heights 83% of its residents are African American. 32.6% of the population is below the poverty line, including 36.2% of those under age 18 and 51.9% of those age 65 or over. In the city of Hamlet 34.51% of its residents are African American. 22.2% of the population are below the poverty line, including 33.9% of those under age 18 and 18.2% of those age 65 or over.

It is abundantly clear that these residents are at high risk of serious health issues, but are not in a financial position to combat the ill effects of climate change. Environmental justice law indicates that the disproportionate impacts of air pollution should be offset by greater attention to pollution sources and the reduction of air pollution wherever possible. Advocates nationwide argue that because poor people of color bear a disproportionate burden of air pollution, their communities should receive a disproportionate share of money and technology to reduce toxic emissions and

that laws such as the Clean Air Act should close loopholes that allow facilities to escape pollution controls.

History

This region of Richmond County has had its fair share of community tragedy. On September 3, 1991, 25 people were killed when the Imperial Food chicken processing plant in Hamlet caught on fire. Hamlet is known for its CSX train hub. The rail line has been known to transport dangerous and toxic cargo over the years. According to residents' accounts, many of their friends and family members who worked for CSX over the years have died from various illnesses due to the toxic exposure. The constant assault of air pollution is a tragedy that has to change.

Results achieved

Approximately one year ago Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League helped organize a local chapter in the region known as the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County to address the public health threat of increased air pollution in the region. Since then the group has had several public awareness and strategic planning meetings. They have gone on a public education crusade to make residents aware of the threat by creating and distributing fact sheets, flyers, signs, and bumper stickers. They have also gone door-to-door and have participated in speaking engagements at the local churches, dinner gatherings, and other organizational groups. Some of their members have been trained to collect air samples according to the Bucket Brigade method, and have gathered two air samples near the Duke Energy Turbines to be independently tested for toxins. The air testing result found significant levels of health threatening pollutants. Recently they were able to acquire a small mini-grant of \$2,000 to buy support equipment and pay for air quality testing. Also they held a successful press conference at the state's capital in Raleigh, NC to inform the people in the state of the disproportionate impacts of air pollution in the Hamlet region and how NCDAQ ignored these impacts and issued Duke Energy a permit to increase its pollution output. At this press conference they also announced that BREDL and the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County filed a CAA 505 petition to the EPA to object to Duke's permit because of the inconsistencies of the NCDAQ. This story was picked up by media outlets throughout the state including the local paper in Richmond County. As a result of these actions more residents are aware of these issues.

Benefits from the results of project

The results of this project will empower and educate the local residents to get involved in efforts to lower local pollution levels, improve air quality, reduce impacts on climate change, and increase climate resiliency.

III. Organization's Historical Connection to the Affected Community

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League first became involved in the environmental justice movement in Richmond County when North Carolina was selected as the site of a low-level nuclear waste dump by a panel of eight Southeastern states (the Southeast Compact), enacted by the US Congress under the Low Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980. In November 1989, four locations had been selected as potential sites in these counties: Richmond, Rowan, Union and Wake. BREDL worked hard to organize these communities across

the state. Then, in 1990, the sites were narrowed down to two: southwest Wake County near Apex and southeast Richmond County near Hamlet, chosen for their sandy soils.

During this time, people of Richmond County, Native American, African American, and Caucasian, banded together to form a chapter of the League, known as FOR Richmond County's Environment (FORRCE), and convinced county officials and natural leaders of the communities that the dump was too dangerous for Hamlet. Nearly 150 people would have had to be relocated in Richmond County, had it been selected. This was a huge victory for Richmond County, leaving Wake County as the finalist site. North Carolina officially withdrew from the Southeast Interstate Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Compact on July 20, 1999.

In the years that followed, BREDL staff and Board of Directors maintained close relationships with the members of FORRCE of other Richmond county residents. When a commercial megadump was proposed for Richmond County, concerned citizens formed a second BREDL chapter, Save Our Abundant Resources (SOAR). The group was successful at stopping the dump and helped secure a new piece of legislation in 2007 protecting eco-sensitive areas from commercial megadumps, such as parks and wetlands, after years of citizen-led actions, including a resolution passed by the local county board and coordinated strategies at the community level.

The Concerned Citizens of Richmond County were founded by three African-American women in 2013 in the footsteps of these successful local BREDL chapter campaigns, to investigate health problems and advocate for environmental justice in Hamlet. From the beginning, BREDL chapters have specialized in original research of environmental issues and provided this information to the public. Our program uses this knowledge to frame the debate, to change public opinion, to compel action, to change public policy and reduce or eliminate pollution. Staff and volunteers provide training in strategic campaign development, media effectiveness, finance and fundraising, lobbying and legal issues, and environmental testing, in order to effectively organize community action. BREDL assists new groups in setting up teams to conduct research, educate the public and build membership.

Each BREDL chapter selects a member to serve on the BREDL Board of Directors. With representatives on the BREDL board, all chapters are privy to the organization's operations and vote on matters relating to governance, issues, programmatic focus, funding, and strategic direction. The community empowerment that is taking place today in Richmond County by CCRC is a testament to the tradition of environmental justice and community-building at the grassroots level that BREDL continues to serve.

IV. Project Description

i) The activities of this project will include education, training, outreach, air quality testing, research, pollution assessments and evaluations, and capacity-building during the year of this grant.

A. Education and Outreach

The educational and outreach component is designed to educate and empower local residents, churches, civic groups, local governments, and other organizations about climate change and local air pollution, as well as help residents develop family and community resiliency plans.

Educational & Outreach Activities	Persons Responsible	Goals
1) Invite public to CCRC's monthly "Clean Air for Our Health" meetings. Promote meetings via word of mouth, door to door campaign, phone tree, social media, press releases, and ads in the local paper.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader	8 meetings 10 to 30 attendees each Knock on 300 doors
2) Produce fact sheets on local issues on pollution, ways to reduce pollution and disaster emergency plans. Also produce flyers for meetings and door to door invites.	Project Manager Volunteer	N/A
3) Hold educational meeting at churches, civil groups, local municipalities and other organizations of interest.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader	6 meetings scheduled and conducted
4) Community feedback on climate change and local air population via community environmental surveys. Surveys will be done during door to door campaign, meeting, and other public gathering.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Volunteers Project Manager (produce surveys)	150 to 300 surveys completed
5) Printed Promotionals of project to encourage community involvement: Yard signs, bumper stickers, tee shirts, etc...	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader	N/A
6) Offer gift drawings of energy savings and emergency preparedness products such as an LED lights, solar flashlights, radios, seeds/plants for gardening, free weatherization service, etc... as incentives to come to educational meetings or training.	Project Manager	N/A

B. Assess and Evaluate Community

Assess and evaluate pollution reduction and climate resiliency plans of local municipalities, schools, and major polluting industries. Offer training and/or recommendations to improve plans if necessary.

Assess and Evaluate Activities	Persons Responsible	Goals
1) Research and identify additional polluting sources in the community	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Volunteers	Complete by 2 nd month of project

2) Contact local school system, municipalities (city and county) and other polluting industries to assess and evaluate pollution reduction and climate resiliency plans	Outreach Coordinator Project Manager Volunteers	7 scheduled contacts
3) Train and/or give written recommendations to those who were assessed and evaluated	Project Manager Volunteers	3 trained/ recommendations

C. Air Monitoring and Testing

Periodic air testing and monitoring of the quality of the air using EPA approved standards and labs.

Air Monitoring and Testing Activities	Persons Responsible	Goals
1) Collect at least two air samples in project's target community and send to lab for results	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Trained Volunteers	2 air samples within 2 months of project
2) Evaluate air testing results and air contaminates.	Project Manager	3 rd month of project
3) Use results for education & assess and evaluate components (see above)	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Trained Volunteers Project Manager	N/A
4) Train more volunteers on how to take air samples (also capacity-building)	Project Manager BREDL	6 volunteers trained

D. Building Capacity

Build capacity by training community volunteers how to educate the local community about the issues of this project. Equip them with tools needed such as powerpoints, fact sheets, and flyer. Also increase the membership and volunteers of the local environmental chapter, CCRC by 60%.

Build Capacity Activities	Persons Responsible	Goals
1) At least four train the trainer training sessions for volunteers to train and inform the community through project year and beyond	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Project Manager Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League	4 training sessions
2) Increase membership and volunteers of CCRC by 60% via community educational meetings proposed on this project.	ALL	60% increase

3) Training of local municipalities and company leaders via the evaluation activities.	Project Manager	5 leaders
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E. Climate Resilience

Build climate resilience via education, key partnerships, and local weatherization contractors.

Climate Resilience Activities	Persons Responsible	Goals
1) Educational and outreach activities as described above will include training and fact sheets on emergencies preparedness in case of natural disaster due to climate change.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader Project Manager	N/A
2) Research, identify, and partner with local emergency responders such as the health department, fire department, American Red Cross, and local municipalities.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader	3 to 5 partners
3) Find local contractors who are able to weatherize homes energy savings and storm resistance. Get quotes of different affordable packages for targeted community.	Outreach Coordinator Community Support Leader	5 local weatherization home contractors
4) Produce an emergency resource directory and information of do's and don't in case a natural disaster.	Community Support Leader Volunteers Key Partners	Complete by the 5 th month

ii) The Concerned Citizens of Richmond County will continue to partner with the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League in support of the “Clean Air for Our Health” project, building local grassroots empowerment within a network of regional community-based organizations, sharing resources and expanding its reach and capacity.

The partnership between CCRC and BREDL has been effective in addressing local environmental policy and public health issues in Richmond County since late 2013, after BREDL hired Community Organizer Pastor Cary Rodgers, from neighboring Anson County, to work with communities being directly-impacted by industrial pollution in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. When the Duke Progress Energy turbine facility applied for a state permit to expand its gas powered turbines and increase its pollution output, public meetings were held and facilitated by Rodgers, to inform the local residents about this threat to their health, and a group of neighbors, clergy, and community members shared concerns about toxic smoke and air pollution, and the impact of the turbines and other industrial activities in the Hamlet area, including fracking and sand mining. The group organized quickly and became a BREDL chapter. Members Kim McCall and Debra David began compiling evidence of pollution in their community, and meeting with local officials in early 2014. The groups success in conducting press conferences, meeting with state representatives, obtaining a technical assistance grant for air testing, and collecting sample air-quality tests is a result of the partnership between BREDL and CCRC.

At the heart of the BREDL model is self-identification by local rural communities of threats to their health, safety and economic viability as a result of large-scale polluting industry or resource extraction projects operating in their communities. BREDL functions to assist these communities in educating the citizens and governing bodies about the harmful impacts of pollution and applying effective political pressure to eliminate the source of pollution. In addition to incorporation in a 501(c)3 structure, BREDL offers its chapters training and technical assistance in strategic campaign development, media effectiveness, finance and fundraising, lobbying and legal issues, environmental testing, and sustainable economic development.

As the Concerned Citizens of Richmond County advance their citizen monitoring and climate resiliency campaign, BREDL staff members, Board of Directors, and chapter members will maintain close working relationships with the chapter to foster collaboration between the environmental justice work done in Richmond County with the greater region, in regards to the Clean Air Act and air pollution sources due to an increase in natural gas production and development in the Southeast.

V. Organizational Capacity and Programmatic Capability

The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation created in 1984 for the purpose of environmental education. The governing body is the Board of Directors which has oversight of financial matters, hiring and admission of chapter groups and overall policy. The executive director hired by the board functions as CEO, directing staff and overseeing day-to-day operations and accounting. The administrative systems include quarterly financial reports to the Board, an audit finance committee with oversight of annual IRS-990 tax returns and an annual audit. BREDL uses a cash accounting basis and tracks expenses on a checkbook ledger. We allocate expenditures to budget line items as they are paid from the account. At the end of each budget period, we total costs entered in each line item for each major budget category. These totals would comprise the basis for our financial reporting to the BREDL Board of Directors and to EPA. Our accountant reviews our financial reports for the preparation of our annual IRS Form 990 and an annual audit.

For the two-year EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant Program for Community Research project completed on October 31, 2013 (Grant No. 95490412), BREDL provided quarterly written reports to the project officer at EPA Region 4 Office of Environmental Justice. These reports provided detailed updates on work progress, reports on expenditures, project photographs and schedule updates. The executive director and advisor completed the required grants and debarment training for managing and completing EPA grants including EPA Form 5700-52A, MBE/WBE, Federal Financial Report form 425 (FFR), and other grant activities. A QAPP, quality assurance project plan, was completed and implemented throughout the course of the project. All funds for the project, \$25,000, were expended and accounted for during the grant period. All required documents and a final report were submitted on January 31, 2014, three months after the end of the project. The EPA Project Officer was Kedesch E. Altidor; EPA Grant Coordinator was Daphne Wilson.

Based on this experience, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League would

implement a new project with the same administrative procedures. Most of the personnel who implemented the previous project remain on BREDL staff at the present time, providing the benefit of experience for future projects. For example, on our staff we continue to employ Rev. Charles Utley, who coordinated an EPA grant to assess the Goldberg Brothers junkyard, a source of soil and groundwater contamination in Augusta, Georgia. As a result of the assessment, the state of Georgia in 2001 commenced a cleanup of the former junkyard utilizing EPA funding through the Brownfield program. From 2011 to 2013, Rev. Utley was project manager for our Environmental Justice Small Grant project, "Advancing Environmental Justice at the Nuclear Crossroads." He has worked as an organizer for BREDL since 2002.

The organizational experience of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League is based on three decades of community work, capacity building and environmental education in the South. For example, BREDL has been coordinating and leading community air quality "Bucket Brigade" monitoring training programs since 1999. A scheduled tour of air quality monitoring trainings was held from October 29-31, 1999, across the southern Sandhills region of North Carolina, called the Bucket Brigade Toxic Tour, co-sponsored by EM-POWER! Project of Communities for a Better Environment of California. On the tour, BREDL staff and members gathered in communities that were directly impacted by air pollution from industrial sources, including the Paw Creek Bulk Gasoline Terminal Complex, Biomedical Waste of North Carolina (BMWNC) incinerator in Matthews, NC, Solite/Oldover Corporation, a hazardous waste burner and fuel blending facility in Stanly County, and an intensive hog operation in Cason Old Field in Anson County. Bucket Brigade trainings were held again in 2001, 2004, and most recently in 2013 with our chapter members in Jonas Ridge, NC, at the site of the proposed US Forest Service controlled burn of the Linville Gorge Wilderness.

VI. Qualifications of the Project Manager (PM)

Project Manager: Cary Rodgers

Qualifications: Community Organizer (PT), Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League since November 2013 and environmental advocate volunteer with Pee Dee WALL since 2012.

Clean Air Act Training: Attended the US EPA Clean Air Act Rulemaking and Permitting Training for EJ Communities, March 18 -20, 2014 in Research Triangle Park, NC 27711

Local Organizational Development: Instrumental in organizing and establishing CCRC in Hamlet, NC as an environmental group and chapter of BREDL in 2014.

Past Activities: Organized and help promote over 10 informational and strategic-planning meetings with CCRC. PM and members of CCRC conducted successful investigative work on local polluter, Duke Energy, at the regional NC Department of Air Quality. Also was able to speak at one of the largest African-American churches in Hamlet, NC concerning current environmental issues, over 100 people signed CCRC's petition to stop the expansion of Duke Energy Turbine operations.

VII. Past Performance in Reporting on Outputs and Outcomes

Within the past three years, the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League has successfully completed a project entitled "Advancing Environmental Justice at the Nuclear Crossroads," with a grant of \$25,000 from the EPA EJ Small Grants Program for Community Research, assistance agreement EQ-95490412. The project implementation met and exceeded expectations by providing equipment, technical training, scientific background and direct experience in the gathering of radiological data. The participants in the project were residents of Shell Bluff, living near an operating nuclear power station and a shuttered nuclear weapons plant: Plant Vogtle and the Savannah River Site. Data gathering was accomplished with the use of a hand-held Geiger counter, a portable computer, wireless connections and other hardware for the preparation and testing of samples of various media gathered from several locations around the targeted nuclear facilities. The lessons learned during this project enabled the residents of Shell Bluff to better participate in public hearings, emergency management, and other matters requiring civic involvement regarding nuclear facilities.

In 2007, BREDL successfully completed a five-year project funded by the Citizens Monitoring and Technical Assessment Fund, established by the U.S. Department of Energy in 1998 and administered by RESOLVE (Grant Number MTA-02-004). BREDL's Science Director, Lou Zeller, served as Principal Investigator in this project. The final product of the project was a publication titled, *Sow the Wind – Toxic Air Pollution from the Savannah River Site*. All work products and dissemination activities assigned to BREDL in the grant agreement were completed in a manner that far exceeded basic requirements. Eight years after publication, *Sow the Wind* is still posted at www.bredl.org/pdf2/SOW_THE_WIND_2008.pdf.

VIII. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Information

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League's chapter Concerned Citizens of Richmond County (CCRC) will submit a QAPP if selected for funding. The proposed project will involve the use of existing environmental data or the collection of new data. The QAPP will include the following project elements: key personnel, problem definition, project description, objectives and criteria, documentation and recordkeeping, assessment and response actions, reports and management.